

In the Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method for capturing and encoding a user attribute in a media signal, the method comprising:

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in a media signal capture device, capturing a user attribute of a user of the media signal capture device; wherein the user attribute comprises an image of an identifying characteristic of the user;

encoding a representation of the user attribute into a media signal captured by the media signal capture device.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the user attribute forms at least part of an auxiliary message, and:

embedding the auxiliary message into the media signal.

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3. (Original) The method of claim 2 including steganographically embedding the auxiliary message into the media signal such that the message is substantially imperceptible to a human.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the media signal is an image and the media signal capture device is a camera or scanner.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the media signal is a sequence of video frames and the media signal capture device is a video camera.

6. (Re-presented in independent form) A method for capturing and encoding a user attribute in a media signal, the method comprising:

in a media signal capture device, capturing a user attribute of a user of the media signal capture device;

encoding the user attribute into a media signal captured by the media signal capture device;

~~[The method of claim 1] wherein the media signal is an image, the user attribute is retinal scan data and the media signal capture device is a camera with an eyepiece; and including: capturing a retinal scan of the user through the eyepiece.~~

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7. (Original) The method of claim 6 including:
in response to input from the user to capture one or more images, capturing the retinal scan of the user through the eyepiece; and
encoding the retinal scan data into the one or more images taken in response to the user input.

8. (Original) The method of claim 6 wherein the retinal scan is captured in an image sensor.

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9. (Original) The method of claim 8 wherein the image sensor used to capture the retinal scan is the same as the image sensor in the camera for capturing an image into which the retinal scan data is embedded.

10. (Original) The method of claim 6 including:
hashing a retinal scan image into retinal scan data.

11. (Currently amended) A media signal capture device capable of encoding a user attribute in a media signal captured in the device, the device comprising:

a user attribute capture unit for capturing a user attribute of a user of the media signal capture device; wherein the user attribute comprises an image of an identifying characteristic of the user; and

an encoder for encoding a representation of the user attribute into a media signal captured by the media signal capture device.

12. (Re-presented in independent form) A media signal capture device capable of encoding a user attribute in a media signal captured in the device, the device comprising:

a user attribute capture unit for capturing a user attribute of a user of the media signal capture device; and

an encoder for encoding the user attribute into a media signal captured by the media signal capture device;

[The media signal capture device of claim 11] wherein the media signal capture device is a digital camera and the user attribute capture unit includes an image sensor.

13. (Original) The media signal capture device of claim 12 wherein the image sensor is used to capture the user attribute and a subject image into which the user attribute is encoded.

14. (Original) The media signal capture device of claim 13 wherein the user attribute is encoded into the subject image in response to user input instructing the media signal capture device to capture the subject image.

15. (Currently amended) The media signal capture device of claim 11 wherein the encoder is a [steganographic] steganographic encoder for embedding the user attribute into the media signal.

16. (Original) The media signal capture device of claim 11 wherein the media signal capture device comprises a video recorder.

17. (Currently amended) The media signal capture device of claim 16 wherein the user attribute capture unit includes an image sensor for capturing the image of the identifying characteristic of the user.

18. (Currently amended) The media signal capture device of claim 11 wherein the user attribute [is] includes a voice recording.

19. (Original) The media signal capture device of claim 11 wherein the user attribute is a retinal scan.

20. (Currently amended) A method of authenticating a media signal comprising:
decoding user attribute data encoded in the media signal within a media signal capture device that captured the media signal; wherein the user attribute data comprises a representation derived from an image of an identifying characteristic of the user; and
comparing the decoded user attribute data with user attribute data computed for a person.

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20 wherein the decoding comprises steganographically ~~[embedding]~~ decoding the representation of the user attribute data ~~[in]~~ from the media signal.

22. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20 wherein the user attribute data comprises a retinal scan.

23. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20 wherein the user attribute data comprises a fingerprint scan.

24. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20 wherein the user attribute data comprises a representation of a voice recording and the representation derived from the image of the identifying characteristic of the user.

25. (Original) A computer readable medium on which is stored software for performing the method of claim 20.